

Joint Statement of Civil Rights, Disability and Education Organizations in Opposition to the Student Success Act, H.R. 5

This week, the House will begin debate on the Student Success Act, a bill that would reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), currently known as No Child Left Behind.

The undersigned organizations — including a broad cross section of civil rights, disability, and education organizations — write to firmly oppose this bill. Together, we represent the millions of students with disabilities, low-income students, students of color, English-language learners, migrant students and LGBT students — both boys and girls — who, through education, are working to build bright futures.

All agree that ESEA must be updated. However, this bill is not an update; it is a rollback. It undermines the core American value of equal opportunity in education embodied in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Specifically, it abandons accountability for the achievement and learning gains of subgroups of disadvantaged students who for generations have been harmed by low academic expectations. The bill also eliminates goals and performance targets for academic achievement, removes parameters regarding the use of federal funds to help improve struggling schools, does not address key disparities in opportunity such as access to high-quality college preparatory curricula, restricts the federal government from protecting disadvantaged students, does not address poor quality tests, and fails to advance the current movement toward college-and career-ready standards. It is also a rollback in resources. Schools, districts and states need adequate resources to address the needs of students, particularly as we ratchet up the momentum toward college and career readiness for all students.

As a result, the bill would thrust us back to an earlier time when states could choose to ignore the needs of children of color, low-income students, ELLs, and students with disabilities. The results, for these groups of students and for our nation as a whole, were devastating.

States can do better and the federal government should ensure they do so. Federal funding must be fairly distributed and it must be attached to firm, ambitious, and unequivocal demands for improvements in achievement, high school graduation rates, and gap closing. We know that states, school districts, and schools need a new law. However, the Student Success Act guts hard-won gains in the effort to ensure that all students — especially those who need the most help — get a high-quality education.

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Advocacy Institute
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union
American Federation of Teachers
Autism National Committee (AutCom)
Center for American Progress Action Fund
Center for Law and Education
Children's Defense Fund
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, Inc. (COPPA)
Democrats for Education Reform
Easter Seals
The Education Trust
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund)
Mental Health America
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council of La Raza
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Society
National Education Association
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
The New Teacher Project
Public Advocates
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Southern Poverty Law Center